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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Wednesday, October 29, 1941.

SUBJECT: "CARE OF ELECTRIC EQUIPMENT." Information from rural electrification engineers of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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In many homes today the carpet sweeper and broom still draw the crumbs from the dining-room carpet; the bread toasts in the oven of the kitchen-stove; and many a woman still scrubs the weekly wash by hand. But more and more people have turned to electricity to do these and other household jobs. More and more women have come to depend on electricity to save hard hand-labor at home. Most housewives have taken these electrical helps as a matter of course, once they have become used to them. Most people have felt that electricity and electrical equipment would always be there for the taking when they were ready to buy.

Well, today defense needs are calling for more and more of the raw materials formerly used in making vacuum cleaners, radios, electric irons and washers. There is not enough copper, aluminum, steel and rubber to go around ---- and military needs for these raw materials come first. So today, more than ever you need to give your electrical equipment the care that will make it last.

And to help you save your electrical labor-saving devices, for long and good service, here are a few tips from rural electrification engineers of the Department of Agriculture.

Here's a tip for anyone putting in new electric outlets or wiring a home: Have your outlets at a convenient height rather than down close to the floor. Outlets down in the baseboards may not show as much, but they cause you a lot of stooping and kneeling during the years, and they often cause much more wear on electric cords. They make it just too tempting for you to yank the cord out when you want to remove it instead of taking hold of the plug and pulling it out. If you pull on

the wire instead of the plug, you're sure to have worn frayed wires sooner or later. And these pulled-out, frayed wires can cause short circuits and disastrous fires. The least they can do is to cause you the annoyance of stopping the flow of electricity some day when you especially need it. A convenient place for the outlet beside the ironing board is up on the wall at the height of the board -- or a little above. The same is true of the outlet for your sewing machine, and washing machine.

Speaking of saving electric cords, here are a couple of other tips. One is: Don't run the cord to a lamp under a rug where it will be worn by being walked on. If you don't have an outlet near where you want the lamp, run the cord around the edge of the room where it won't get wear and rough treatment. Another tip is about cords to your iron, toaster, and other small electric equipment. See that these don't get knotted and twisted. When you put your iron or other small equipment away, hang the cords straight over a large hook or nail rather than twisting them up and shoving them into a drawer or on a shelf in the closet. The less wear they get, the longer they'll last.

How often does your telephone or doorbell ring while you're at the ironing board? What's the first thing to do? Play safe and turn the current off, even if you think you'll be gone just a minute. This is especially necessary if you have an electric iron without automatic heat-control. If you leave such an iron on too long, you not only run up your electric bill but you take a chance on burning out the iron so it will no longer give you service.

Of course, you aren't one of these housewives who lets the radio run from early morning to late at night even when she's not listening to it. You know that this is the way to wear out radio tubes fast--and incidentally run up the electric bill. But even if you aren't in the habit of leaving the radio on, you'll be wise to check on the radio whenever you leave the house. Sometimes the radio is tuned

so low you don't know it's on. Just be sure it's switched off before you go out in order to save the tubes.

Now a point about your washing machine. Keep it in good condition by not giving it too heavy a load of washing at a time. Take two tubsful for your weekly wash instead of one.

And your vacuum cleaner. Save strain on the cleaner by emptying the bag of dirt often--every week if you use it regularly for cleaning the house. Keeping the bag clean takes the strain off the motor of the cleaner, and also allows it to do a better and more thorough job of cleaning. Also take care not to let the cleaner pick up sharp things -- bits of glass, pins, tacks and so on. They can do a good deal of damage. If your vacuum cleaner is one of those with a brush, keep that brush free of threads and hairs so the motor won't have to do extra work.

Some electrical equipment needs oiling and some doesn't. That's a point to check on when you buy. Usually the instruction book that comes with the equipment will inform you on this important point. You'll get years more of service from equipment that needs oiling, if you follow the directions for keeping it oiled and cleaned at intervals. But oil only when and where the directions say. And use the kind of oil they say.

Well, these are just simple little everyday common sense ways of caring for your electrical devices. But just such little points as these may save your equipment and save you time, money and labor.

